

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 TUNIS 03514 161032Z
ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08

INR-10 LAB-04 NSAE-00 IO-13 /060 W

-----111197 170804Z /17 15

R 160717Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1118

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TUNIS 3514

USEEC

BRUSSELS ALSO FOR LABATT

PARIS FOR LABATT

E.O.11652: NA

TAGS: ELAB TS

SUBJ: VISIT TO TUNIS OF JOHN VANKDERVEKEN, ASST. GENERAL
SECRETARY OF ICFTU

1. SUMMARY . VANDERVEKEN SAW VARIOUS INTERESTED PARTIES ABOUT
POLITICAL AND UGTT LEADERSHIP SITUATION. HE FAILED TO MEET
WITH PRIME MINISTER AND WAS DENIED ACCESS TO ACHOUR AND OTHER
UGTT PRISONERS. HE FELT RECENT GOT ATTACKS ON KERSTEN WERE
POLITICALLY MOTIVATED AND HE CONFIRMED ICFTU WOULD NOT
RECOGNIZE NEW UGTT OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY.

2. VANDERVEKEN'S OBJECTIVES IN MAKING THIS, HIS SECOND,
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 TUNIS 03514 161032Z

TRIP TO TUNIS SINCE THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 26 WERE TO
INVESTIGATE THE TUNISIAN POLITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL
AND THE STATUS OF IMPRISONED UGTT FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL
HABIB ACHOUR AND ASSOCIATES IN PARTICULAR; TO ASCERTAIN
REASONS BEHINND ATTACKS OF GOT AND CURRENT UGTT LEADERS ON
HIS CHIEF, OTTO KERSTEN, GENERAL SECRETARY OF ICFTU;
AND FINALLY, IF POSSIBLE, TO VISIT ACHOUR IN JAIL (ACHOUR

REMAINS A VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ICFTU). DURING HIS STAY IN TUNIS, AMONG THOSE HE SAW WERE MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS JOMAA, PARTY DIRECTOR SAYAH, THE ACHOUR FAMILYUJ ACHOUR DEFENSE ATTORNEY CHEFFI, THE ENTIRE CURRENT UGTT EXECUTIVE BUREAU, THE BELGIAN CHARGE, AMBASSADOR MULCAHY, AND POLITICAL/LABOR OFFICER. HE WAS UNABLE TO SEE PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA WHO CLAIMED TO BE TIED UP WITH VISIT OF PRESIDENT NUMEIRY.

3. PRIME MINISTER ACTING THROUGH JOMAA DECLINED "RECOMMENDING" TO THE COURT THAT VANDERVEKEN BE GIVEN ACCESS TO THE PRISONERS. ACCORDING TO VANDERVEKEN, SAHAH TOLD HIM THAT PSD WAS CONVINCED KERSTEN'S "INTERFERENCE" CONTRIBUTED TO SUBSEQUENT GENERAL STRIKE AND RIOTS. IN RESPONSE TO VANDERVEKEN'S EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ABOUT ACHOUR TRIAL, SAYAH REPORTEDLY COMMENTED THAT "EVEN IF THERE IS A TRIAL AND CONVICTIONS, THE PRESIDENT WILL RESOLVE EVERYTHING."

4. IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH AMBASSADOR MULCAHY, OANDERVEKEN SPECULATED THAT THE RECENT DRUM FIRE OF ATTACKS AGAINST KERSTEN HAD INTENSIFIED BECAUSE GOT'S THEORY OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE" WAS CENTRAL TO ITS CASE AGAINST ACHOUR. SINCE DIPLOMATIC EXIGENCIES PRECLUDED PUBLIC MENTION OF ALLEGED LIBYAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFFAIR, HE FELT THAT KERSTEN HAD BEEN CHOSEN AS A SURROGATE. WE RESPONDED THAT WE HAD NOT NOTED ANY INCREASE IN ANTI-ICFTU STATEMENTS; LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 TUNIS 03514 161032Z

THE GOT HAD PROTESTED FROM THE START KERSTEN'S ACTIONS AT EVE OF STRIKE. VANDERVEKEN SAID THAT IN VIEW OF CONTINUED IMPRISONMENT OF ACHOUR AND OTHER ATTESTED TRADE UNIONISTS, ICFTU RECOGNITION OF THE NEWLY INSTALLED UOTT LEADERSHIP "WAS NOT IN THE CARDS." (ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING OPINING IN HAMBURG ON MAY 16 WILL TAKE UP RECOGNITION ISSUE.) VANDERVEKEN ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT CONTINUED DETENTION OF ACHOUR AND OTHER ARRESTED TRADE UNIONISTS, AND HE OBSERVED THAT TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT SEEMED DETERMINED TO PROCEED WITH TRIAL. VANDERVEKEN SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE A SERIOUS MISTAKE, AND HE SPECULATED THAT TUNISIANS MIGHT BE MADE TO SEE REASON IF OTHER PERSONS OR INSTITUTIONS ENJOYING GOT RESPECT RAISE MATTER DIRECTLY. HE RULED OUT IRVING BROWN, WHOM IS SAID WAS ILL, AND FRANCIS BLANCHARD, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS BEING UNWILLING TO INTERVENE IN SUCH MATTERS. INDIRECTLY, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY APPROACH THE GOT ON ACHOUR CASE, AMBASSADOR DID NOT GIVE VANDERVEKEN A DIRECT RESPONSE, ALTHOUGH HE DID MENTION THAT HE MIGHT HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE MATTER UNOFFICIALLY. WITH BOURGUIBA, JR. IN COMING WEEK. MULCAHY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: VISITS, LABOR UNION OFFICIALS, NEGOTIATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TUNIS03514
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780207-0601
Format: TEL
From: TUNIS USEEC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780552/aaaabsao.tel
Line Count: 114
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fe353e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SIL
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2672838
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT TO TUNIS OF JOHN VANKDERVEKEN, ASST. GENERAL SECRETARY OF ICFTU
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, TS, ICFTU, (VANDERVEKEN, JOHN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fe353e9c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014